

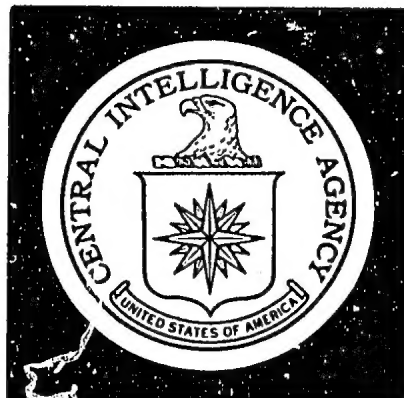
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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# Intelligence Memorandum

*Reactions in Latin America to Allende's Victory in Chile*

State Dept. review  
completed

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
17 September 1970

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Reactions in Latin America to Allende's Victory in Chile

Summary

There seems to be a widespread conviction in Latin America that Salvador Allende's 36-percent plurality in the Chilean presidential election is a political watershed that is likely to have important repercussions throughout the hemisphere. Most governments have refrained from public comment, apparently choosing to await the outcome of the vote of the Chilean Congress on Allende and runner-up Jorge Alessandri that is scheduled for 24 October. They no doubt also want to appraise opinion at home and to study the reactions of other Latin American countries and of the US. Cuba is apparently the only country that has formally congratulated Allende, but the text of the message has not yet been made public and Fidel Castro has withheld comment. In general, political reactions have fallen into three categories. Orthodox Marxists and radical nationalists are jubilant over Allende's victory. They believe that their chances for a larger political role have been enhanced in many countries. Christian Democratic and other left-of-center parties are disappointed over the defeat of Radomiro Tomic, Chile's Christian Democratic candidate, and are worried about their own political fortunes. Political groups in the center and on the right are concerned and apprehensive; many are hostile. In some countries these groups probably will counsel harsher treatment of left-wing opposition. On the extreme right, there is unmitigated opposition to Allende.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated with the Office of National Estimates and the Deputy Directorate for Plans.

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Initially, the Soviet press has greeted Allende's victory with enthusiasm, calling the results a "big success for left-wing forces." The election results are seen as having "profound significance" as regards bolstering the independence from the US not only of Chile but all Latin America. The Director of Moscow's Latin American Institute told a US Embassy official on 1 September that the USSR would aid an Allende administration if the US were to pursue a policy of "economic isolation" like that toward Cuba. He added that if the US and Chile continue to have "normal relations," he saw "little prospect of sizable Soviet aid."

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Reactions From Chile's Neighbors

1. It is likely that the first and some of the most important effects of Allende's election will be felt by Chile's immediate neighbors--Argentina, Bolivia, and Peru. Since the 1830s relations between Chile and both Peru and Bolivia have been marred by rivalry and hostility. Chile's mineral rich northernmost provinces were won from Bolivia and Peru as a result of the War of the Pacific (1879-1883), and the paramount issue still dividing Chile and Bolivia grows out of La Paz' unyielding desire to regain access to the Pacific. Argentine-Chilean relations, likewise, have been troubled for decades by smoldering boundary disputes and military rivalry and competition. All three of Chile's neighbors, for different reasons, will be sedulous observers of Allende and his Popular Unity coalition, though to date the attitude of each has been cautious.

Peru

2. A high-level US observer in Lima has reported that Allende's victory "has been generally well received" and should "give the Peruvian Government renewed determination to pursue its revolutionary program." Moderate generals, however, are worried about the existence of a Communist state on Peru's southern border, especially in the light of the long-standing military rivalries with Chile.

3. Members of the Velasco government thus far have refrained from public comments on the Chilean election

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Those government officials who are strongly committed to the "revolutionary" programs of the Velasco administration and to even more rapid reforms probably think that an Allende government will reinforce Peru's revolution.

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4. More moderate members of the Velasco government, however, are probably disturbed by Allende's success.

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Moderate military leaders probably believe that a Marxist government in Chile would make it more difficult for them to oppose the rapid pace of reform currently espoused by their own radicals, and many of the generals may fear that Chile will become a center for subversion in Latin America. There is probably also apprehension that the Soviets will build up their military strength in Chile if Allende takes office in November.

5. Despite these mixed views toward Allende, the Peruvian Government's relations with the Popular Unity coalition would probably be friendly, and the two governments would be likely to find areas of common interest. For instance, although Peru has felt that it could not take the initiative in restoring relations with Cuba, it might be quick to follow a Chilean exchange of ambassadors with Havana.

#### Bolivia

6. So far, President Ovando is one of only four Latin American heads of state who have commented publicly on Allende's victory. Although he told US Ambassador Siracusa on election eve that he favored Radomiro Tomic, the candidate of Chile's Christian Democratic Party, he said on 7 September in a press conference that "it is possible for Bolivia to live in friendship with a Marxist regime that doesn't use violence to impose its goals" and expressed the belief that the Chilean Congress should declare Allende winner. Asked if he thought Bolivian-Chilean relations might improve under an Allende administration, Ovando replied that "if Allende really wants justice not only in his country, but in the whole world, logically he must recognize Bolivia's right to the sea."

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7. Bolivian military leaders, however, view an Allende government with considerable alarm.

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The military apparently fear that with Allende in power, Bolivian guerrillas and urban terrorists could expect considerable support from Chilean sources.

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9. Reaction among other sectors in Bolivia has been mixed. Moderate businessmen reportedly fear that radicals will be reinforced and more audacious and that Bolivia will lean more toward the left under the influence of an Allende administration, especially because the Bolivian Government is "without definition." They reportedly are afraid that a "strong anti-US front composed of Chile, Peru, and Bolivia could become a reality."

10. Leaders of the important Bolivian Mine Workers Federation and the Bolivian Workers Central reportedly consider the Allende victory "a triumph of the working class and oppressed masses." They believe that Allende will develop "intense" relations with Cuba but that he will move calmly and gradually in implementing domestic reforms. They do not discount the possibility of a "right-wing" coup attempt.

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Argentina

11. Although the government thus far has not reacted publicly, it is deeply concerned over the election outcome.

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12. Foreign Ministry officials are taking a cautious approach and believe that it is premature to comment publicly on the Allende victory.

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13. The US Embassy in Buenos Aires reports that the Argentine military are "quite concerned--even alarmed--by prospects of an Allende presidency, but they are not in a state of panic." Army commander General Lanusse said that the situation "is very serious for Argentina," but did not imply an impending Argentine military move. The Embassy reports that the government "apparently propose to take no initiatives in the matter at this time." Foreign Ministry officials reportedly believe that reaction in Chile against any Argentine intervention would be swift and united.

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14. Reaction by Argentine politicians has thus far been low-key. Most leaders have refrained from public comment, but there is widespread opinion that an Allende government would be a major and tragic hemispheric development. Peron's representative in Argentina, however, extolled the victory of the Chilean "popular movement" and identified Peron with Allende. Argentine Communist Party leaflets have lauded Allende and have called for unity against the Argentine dictatorship. Although a variety of labor leaders have expressed disappointment over the election, even foreseeing an eventual Communist take-over in Chile, they are "in no sense alarmed." There has been almost no discernible student reaction.

Reaction from Other South American Countries

Brazil

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Foreign Ministry and high-level military circles have adopted a righteous "we-told-you-so" attitude, charging that a "socialist" government like Frei's will "inevitably lead to a Communist regime."

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17. There are no indications that either the Brazilian Government or the military are considering taking any action against Chile, but the military apparently views increased informal cooperation with Argentina as an inevitable outgrowth of the Chilean situation.

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18. Reaction from Brazil's generally conservatively oriented press has been hostile and apprehensive. The independent Jornal do Brasil called the outcome a "political earthquake, more terrible than past earthquakes in Chile." The conservative O Estado de Sao Paulo warned that "it is not the first time in contemporary history that dictatorship comes to power taking advantage of democratic constitutional rights....Adolf Hitler was an example in 1933." O Jornal blames the election result on Chile's democratic forces, particularly the Christian Democrats, who had "allowed" themselves to be seduced by the lullaby of cooperation "with the Marxists." O Estado de Sao Paulo saw an Allende government following the path of Cuba, including the "solicitation of Soviet alms," and O Jornal foresaw a menace of subversion from Chile "with its red frontiers bordering on the Latin democracies."

#### Venezuela

19. President Caldera, in a press conference on 10 September, said that much can be learned from the Chilean elections both by those who "celebrate" the results and by those who "lament." He added, however, that he believes President Frei is still the most popular political figure in Chile. His remarks were probably intended to blunt charges in Venezuela that Christian Democracy in Latin America is declining. (Caldera's Christian Democratic Party (COPEI) is the only major Christian Democratic party outside of Chile.)

20. A COPEI leader told the US Embassy in Caracas that he and his associates were badly shaken by Allende's victory and that the party would have to study the implications. According to press reports, he believes that the first lesson to be learned from the Chilean election is that a united

front of progressive parties is necessary in Venezuela. Thus, in the short run, Allende's victory may tend to increase cooperation in Congress between COPEI and the progressive Accion Democratica party. It may also enhance the possibility of broader cooperation among Venezuela's weak leftist forces, even though Caldera and at least one other prominent COPEI leader have criticized Tomic for moving too far left in his campaign in Chile.

21. Former President Romulo Betancourt stated in public that the election results in Chile must be respected and that Allende's victory proves the bankruptcy of the radical Marxist view that violence is the preferred means of attaining power. He went on to reiterate his "Betancourt Doctrine" that only those governments acquiring power legally and through elections should be afforded diplomatic recognition and participation in the inter-American system.

#### Colombia

22. Reaction in Colombia is moderate and largely uncritical, probably because of the widespread lack of informed opinion about Chile and the conviction that Chilean political developments affect Colombia only peripherally. President Misael Pastrana answered a question about the Chilean election in a press conference on 7 September. Although he stressed his intention to refrain from commenting on internal Chilean politics, Pastrana nevertheless again advocated constitutional reforms in Colombia to provide for run-off elections when a candidate fails to win a majority vote.

23. Much of the discussion in Colombia about Allende's victory seems to center on the prospects for the continuance of the Andean Pact, a sub-regional association of five South American countries that has been a favorite Colombian project for several years. In his press conference Pastrana was optimistic that Allende would uphold Chile's commitments to the pact. Former President Lleras, who with Chilean President Frei was the principal architect of the pact, also publicly stated his belief that the association would not be significantly affected by Allende's victory.

24. Colombian press comments have been generally moderate and restrained. A columnist for El Espectador, a prestigious Bogota daily, said that Allende is a serious person and not a "tropical" like Castro.

#### Uruguay

25. Reaction in Uruguay has been limited so far to press and media commentaries reflecting a favorable reception of Allende's victory. It is unlikely that the Pacheco government will criticize the results in view of Uruguay's firm commitment since the first decades of the 20th century to an advanced welfare system and socialism. Newspapers representing various factions of the ruling Colorado Party state optimistically that Allende will bring liberal socialism to Chile within a democratic system. The Colorado paper El Diario compared Allende's brand of socialism to Dubcek's. Another Colorado paper, La Manana, notes that Allende's election strengthens Moscow's position against radical Marxists and terrorists who espouse violent paths to power. The Catholic paper favorably compares Allende's politics to Scandinavian socialism. The orthodox Communist Party daily, El Popular, of course, was jubilant.

#### Ecuador

26. On 10 September President Velasco Ibarra became the fourth Latin American head of state to comment publicly on Allende's victory. Quito radio quoted his comment that "the Chilean people expressed their sovereign will and it must be respected by all states, whether they like it or not." There has been no other official UNCC [redacted] reaction from Ecuador.

#### Reaction From Middle America

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#### Mexico

27. Mexican officials have made no public statements, but all of the press has expressed satisfaction with the peaceful course of the election. Excelsior, a prominent Mexico City daily, editorialized that, "the democratic maturity of the Chilean people exercised the

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right of self-determination, and they deserve the highest respect from all the nations of the world." It also cautiously pointed out that "Allende, a democratically and freely elected president, has assumed, above any other considerations, a commitment to freedom."

28. Another Excelsior editorial commented that "Chilean socialism has come from the ballot box, not from an explosion of violence, assault on palaces, or military coups." El Dia of Mexico City said that Allende's victory "expresses the desire of the Chilean people for deep changes in the country's basic structure."

29. Such comments probably accurately reflect the mood and opinions of many Mexican officials and the informed public. Mexico's firm espousal of non-intervention, its tradition of popular and nationalist reforms growing out of its own experiences, and its independent foreign policy impel it toward an uncritical judgement on Allende.

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### Central America and the Caribbean

31. Reaction from most Central American and Caribbean states has been limited and brief.

#### El Salvador

32. In El Salvador, where the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) is a major political force, the Allende victory has attracted intensive media and public attention, however.

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Editorials and signed columns warn that the PDC is a "bridgehead to communism" and that any PDC election victory will result in the country being "sold out to the Communists." A columnist who is often a spokesman for the Salvadoran oligarchy is running a series that seeks to show that Chilean Christian Democracy was responsible for Allende's victory.

### Costa Rica

33. The Costa Rican press has also devoted detailed attention to the Chilean elections. Although it is almost uniformly critical, it probably has not reflected the depth of antipathy that President Figueres feels for Allende. News accounts have emphasized that the Chilean Congress is expected to confirm Allende's plurality and that the Chilean military is expected to respect the decision. Editorial opinion, however, reflects dismay over Allende's victory. La Nacion, an influential conservative daily, termed it a "serious threat to all other Latin American people" and criticized Chilean democratic elements for being "lost in indecision." The more progressive La Republica said that Allende's victory could be blamed on the "suicidal efforts of Chilean democratic elements." The only approving reaction came from the Communist Youth of Costa Rica.

### Honduras, Panama

34. Statements by Radio Honduras are probably typical of the reactions of official and ruling circles in the remaining Central American countries. A station editorial emphasized that it was premature for "Communists throughout the world" to show enthusiasm for Allende's victory, because "we are sure that the last word is yet to be heard." Editorials in Panama's progovernment newspapers indicate unease over the outcome of the Chilean election. The blame for the "victory of Communism" is placed, however, on the US for "lack of sensitivity" to Latin American needs.

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### Dominican Republic

35. Although President Balaguer of the Dominican Republic has declined to comment, other officials have thus far reacted with cautious acceptance. Some leaders have commented on the likelihood of Allende's election to the presidency by Congress and say that they expect cordial relations with his government. Former President Juan Bosch emphasized that Allende's victory presented problems for US policy in Latin America and claimed that the US could do little to avert a "Chilean Revolution" without risking grave consequences.

36. Informed opinion in the Dominican Republic takes a number of different lines. Comment concentrates on the belief that "it can't happen here" because the military would not permit it. Moderate leftists are somewhat concerned that the Balaguer government could adopt a more repressive attitude toward the left and opposition in general. At the same time, however, the Chilean election reinforces the views of some of the left that change is inevitable and highly desirable. The Dominican Republic is somewhat isolated from the Latin American political mainstream, and Allende's victory is not likely to have an immediate or profound impact on the country's political life.

### Cuba

37. So far Cuban public comment has been confined to a few Radio Havana broadcasts and probably to daily newspaper coverage. The tone of these statements is enthusiastic without being overly boastful or confident. It appears that Castro prefers to continue the policy he followed during the Chilean electoral campaign of avoiding comment on Chilean affairs as much as possible.

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38. Fidel Castro and Salvador Allende have been friends since 1959, when the Chilean senator began his frequent and regular visits to Cuba. Castro has praised Allende many times during the past 11 years and will be delighted to have a friend and sympathizer



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governing an important Latin American country. The Cuban leader went to some lengths to aid the Allende campaign:

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playing to perfection a careful public role designed to deny Allende's opponents any issue. In anticipation of Allende's victory, the Cuban Communist Party recently re-established relations with the Chilean Communist Party in order to be on good terms with the key element of Allende's coalition. Havana's relations with Allende's Socialist Party are already good. Havana probably expects to gain an increase in trade, a resumption of diplomatic ties, and a full restoration of normal intercourse between the two countries.

### Conclusion

39. Preliminary reaction in Latin America to Allende's victory has generally been cautious. There is widespread acceptance of or resignation to the possibility that Allende will be inaugurated in November, and there seems to be no inclination in any country to interfere openly in Chilean affairs. Most governments have withheld official comment, in view of the fluidity of the Chilean situation.

40. These initial responses will probably prevail at least until after the Chilean Congress votes on the candidates. If Allende is confirmed, he will probably receive the public endorsement of additional governments, and, once he is inaugurated, most countries of the hemisphere will probably attempt to establish cordial relations with his government.

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